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Fifteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 1750 (2007) of 30 March 2007, the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) until 30 September 2007 and requested me to present, no later than 45 days prior to the expiration of the mandate, a detailed drawdown plan for the Mission, including specific recommendations on force levels. In order to collect the information required to prepare the plan, an interdepartmental technical assessment mission led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations visited Liberia from 11 to 22 June. The present report provides an update on major developments since my report of 15 March 2007 (S/2007/151) and sets out the drawdown plan and recommendations on force levels.

II. Major developments

Political situation

2. During the reporting period, the Government of Liberia continued to implement its agenda for peace consolidation, governance reform and economic recovery. As part of the efforts to improve governance, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf undertook an extended visit to Nimba, Grand Gedeh, River Cess, Sinoe, Grand Kru and Maryland Counties in April to conduct a first-hand assessment of the economic, social and infrastructural conditions in these areas and to hold "town hall" meetings with local communities. In Harper, Maryland County, the President convened the first-ever cabinet meeting held outside Monrovia.

3. In furtherance of the Government's efforts to foster national reconciliation and ensure inclusiveness in the decision-making process, President Johnson-Sirleaf began a series of "executive consultations" to solicit the views of national stakeholders on the country's development and recovery process. On 24 June, she met with the Inter-religious Council of Liberia, the Liberian Business Association, and the Liberian Council of Chiefs. On 6 and 10 July, she met with opposition political parties and the Liberian National Bar Association.

4. During the period under review, the Government continued its anti-corruption campaign. On 22 March, the Deputy Minister and an assistant minister in the

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Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy were relieved of their posts for allegedly granting bogus mining licences. The trials of the former Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, Gyude Bryant, who was indicted on charges of economic sabotage, and the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Edwin Snowe, who was indicted on charges of theft of US$ 1 million from the Liberia Petroleum Refining Corporation during his tenure as Managing Director, are ongoing.

5. However, on 12 and 18 June, the independent Auditor General, who is funded by the European Commission, publicly alleged that the current Government of Liberia was "three times more corrupt" than its predecessor, without providing the evidence to support this allegation, and that "millions of dollars were unaccounted for" in the 2007/08 draft budget. During a public hearing on the draft budget on 26 June, the Auditor General informed the legislature that the draft budget did not "measure the true financial position of Liberia". The President requested the Auditor General to initiate dialogue with the relevant ministries to discuss those areas concerning which he had expressed concerns. In the meantime, the draft budget, amounting to US$ 199 million, was approved by the Senate on 24 July.

6. The crisis in the legislature that followed the resignation of the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Edwin Snowe, has been resolved. It will be recalled that Mr. Snowe resigned amid expressions of lack of confidence in his leadership by members of the House. Thereafter, the work of the legislature was paralysed by a dispute over the issue of succession. On 5 April, Alex Tyler of the Liberian Action Party was elected as the new Speaker. During the reporting period, the legislature passed several important bills, including the National Census Act, and ratified a number of agreements, including the renegotiated Mittal Steel Agreement.

Security situation

7. The overall security situation in Liberia has remained generally calm and stable. However, on 17 July, George Koukou, a former Speaker of the National Transitional Legislative Assembly, and Major General Charles Julu, a former Army Chief of Staff and commander of the Special Anti-Terrorist Unit during President Samuel Doe's administration, were arrested and charged with treason for planning to destabilize the Government. The arrests were made after local authorities in Côte d'Ivoire detained a third Liberian, Colonel Dorbor, who had allegedly attempted to purchase and transport arms to Liberia.

8. Other significant security-related developments during the reporting period included violent protests by disgruntled groups and incidents relating to land disputes. On 7 April, a land dispute between the citizens of Blebo and Karbwlaken in Grand Kru County resulted in the burning of houses in Blebo. On 28 April, the death of a five-year old boy in Bong Mines, Bong County, led to a violent disturbance following allegations that the police were involved in the child's death. A newly constructed police station was burned down, while the residences of the Liberian National Police and the house of the city mayor were vandalized during the disturbance. The joint intervention of UNMIL and the county superintendent brought the situation under control.

9. There were also several violent demonstrations involving university students, including a two-day protest in mid-April at the Cuttington University in Gbarnga,

Bong County over inadequate facilities on the campus. On 19 June, the Liberia National Police sought the support of the UNMIL formed police units to control a violent protest at the University of Liberia by students expressing solidarity with their lecturers, who had been on strike over the non-payment of salary arrears and benefits. The disturbances occurred in front of the President's Office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Monrovia.

10. On 20 June, former combatants protesting delays in the payment of subsistence allowances held simultaneous demonstrations in Buchanan, Ganta and Gbarnga. The situation deteriorated in Buchanan when ex-combatants forcibly entered the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office and damaged property. On 16 July, a group of ex-combatants assembled outside the UNDP headquarters in Monrovia demanding inclusion in reintegration programmes and payment to them of outstanding allowances. The UNDP senior management met with the group and explained to them the plans to provide reintegration opportunities for the remaining caseload of ex-combatants.

11. Meanwhile, on 9 July, during a visit by the Inspector General of Police to the Freeport in Monrovia to investigate reports about the theft of fuel, violent clashes broke out between the Liberia National Police and the Liberia Seaport Police, which resulted in injuries to 50 persons. On the same day, the President directed that a board of inquiry be convened to investigate the incident. The board has since submitted its report to the President for her review and appropriate action.

12. Incidents of armed robbery and rape continued to increase during the reporting period, prompting President Johnson-Sirleaf to launch "Operation calm down fear", which has increased the number of security patrols and spot-checks on vehicles in Monrovia. This is in addition to the ongoing "Operation sweeping wave", which involves cordon and search activities, and increased day and night patrols in high crime areas.

13. The security situation along the borders with Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea remains stable. However, the incident referred to in paragraph 7 above underscores the need for effective policing of the border areas. UNMIL continues to conduct several operations to deter the possible cross-border movement of weapons and recruitment of mercenaries, as well as to reassure the local populations and foster better coordination among security agencies deployed in the border areas. In this regard, the Mission conducted concurrent patrols with the Guinean armed forces along the Liberian-Guinean border in "Operation Seskin 4 and 5" from 9 to 13 April and from 27 to 30 May. Similar concurrent patrols were conducted along the Liberian-Sierra Leonean border with the Sierra Leonean armed forces in "Operation Loko 7, 8 and 9" from 26 to 28 April, 28 to 30 May and 27 to 29 June. UNMIL also continued to conduct coordinated patrols with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) to monitor the security situation along the Liberian-Ivorian border.

III. Technical assessment mission

14. The technical assessment mission led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which visited Liberia from 11 to 22 June to collect the information required in order to develop the plan for the drawdown of UNMIL, was comprised of representatives of the Department of Political Affairs, the Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Safety and Security, UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The assessment mission met with a broad cross-section of stakeholders, including UNMIL, the United Nations country team, Government ministers and members of the donor and diplomatic community, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union, as well as political parties, non-governmental organizations and civil society groups. The assessment mission also visited Bomi and Grand Cape Mount Counties, where it specifically assessed the challenges and operational capabilities of the newly trained Liberian National Police deployed in these two counties. Prior to its departure from Liberia, the assessment mission discussed its findings with President Johnson-Sirleaf, the International Contact Group on Liberia and the United Nations country team.

Findings

A. Security situation and threat assessment

15. Liberia has become a generally stable country in a volatile subregion. However, the prevailing peace is very fragile and Liberia is still susceptible to lawlessness. The most immediate threats to sustained peace and stability in Liberia at this stage include increasing violent criminal activities, especially armed robbery and rape; the limited capacity of the security sector to curb violent crime; the weak justice system; the limited capacity of key national institutions to deliver on the promised peace dividend; the proliferation of disaffected groups such as unemployed ex-combatants, deactivated soldiers and police personnel, and elements from the dismantled irregular militias; economic insecurity, in particular youth unemployment; resurfacing ethnic and social cleavages; and the perception by some opposition political parties that the Government is not genuinely pursuing national reconciliation.

16. There is still a risk of the possible resurgence of armed groups, which may be easily organized to cause political instability. Some Liberian stakeholders expressed concern that elements whose interests are threatened by the Government's reform agenda, as well as individuals loyal to former President Charles Taylor, could attempt to instigate political instability. These factors, as well as the risk of a possible spillover from the unstable situation in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, underscore the country's continued vulnerability. Nonetheless, Liberia's relations with its neighbours have improved to the extent that potential insurgents would find it difficult to use a neighbouring country's territory to destabilize the country.

17. Prior to the arrival of the technical assessment mission, four joint security assessment teams, co-led by UNMIL and the Government, conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the security situation in the country. The teams, which included representatives of UNMIL, the United Nations country team and the Ministries of Internal Affairs, Defence and National Security, as well as the National Security Agency, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and the Liberian National Police, concluded that security, State administration and the rule of law in the counties were extremely limited. While the security situation in Bomi, Grand Cape Mount and Margibi Counties was assessed

as relatively benign, Sinoe and Lofa Counties were assessed as relatively high risk areas.

18. The joint security assessment teams also determined that the weak presence of State authority in some counties, aggravated by poor communications and the lack of livelihood opportunities, have contributed to the movement of ex-combatants, youth and foreigners into areas that are rich in natural and mineral resources. In some of these areas, the tension between the local residents and the "enclaves" who are engaged in these illegal activities is very high. In addition, larger communities of ex-combatants tend to maintain liaison with their former factional commanders. The joint security assessment teams concluded that the security cover provided by UNMIL remains a critical guarantee of peace and stability in Liberia.

B. Status of implementation of the Mission's mandate

19. Following the installation of an elected Government in January 2006, UNMIL redefined its strategic goal to focus on peace consolidation and helping Liberia to attain a steady state of security with police and armed forces that can stand on their own. To that end, the priorities of UNMIL emanating from its mandate include assisting the Government to rebuild its security and rule of law sectors, re-establish functioning administrative structures throughout the country, complete the reintegration of ex-combatants, restore proper administration of the country's natural resources, resettle returnees and internally displaced persons, promote and protect human rights, and forge national reconciliation. Working in cooperation with the United Nations country team and other international partners, UNMIL has made considerable progress in implementing these key aspects of its mandate over the past year. However, the remaining tasks and the new challenges that are emerging are overwhelming.

1. Rebuilding the Liberian National Police

20. UNMIL has achieved the initial target of providing basic training for 3,500 police officers by 30 June. To date, 3,522 police officers have graduated from the National Police Academy. The first all-female class, comprising 110 police recruits, began training on 4 June after completing the special Ministry of Education/Liberian National Police/United Nations police educational support programme. In addition, several advanced programmes designed to strengthen the supervisory and specialized capacities of the national police are ongoing.

21. However, the deployment of the Liberian National Police to the counties continues to be hampered by lack of funding, basic infrastructure and police equipment, including vehicles and communications. To date, only 676 police personnel have been deployed to the 15 counties. The Inspector General of the Liberian National Police informed the assessment mission that the most pressing needs of the police are adequate funding; equipment, especially communications equipment, vehicles, vehicle maintenance facilities and forensic laboratory equipment; training of specialists; police infrastructure in the counties; development of managerial capacity and elimination of corruption.

22. On 20 June, the technical assessment mission visited the Liberian National Police county headquarters in Bomi and Grand Cape Mount Counties, where it witnessed first-hand the administrative and logistical challenges facing the police.

Owing to a lack of communication facilities in these county headquarters, police officers use their personal mobile phones to meet their reporting responsibilities to their commanders and to communicate among themselves, as well as to police headquarters. In Grand Cape Mount County, where the police have only one vehicle and a motorbike for use by 42 officers, the county commander pays for the fuel and maintenance of the vehicle from his own salary. He also provides the fuel for a donated generator and food for detainees from his personal resources.

23. The Government, with the support of its international partners, is addressing some of the infrastructure challenges facing the police force. Through bilateral support provided by Norway and the Netherlands, the renovation, construction and equipping of police stations are under way in Buchanan in Grand Bassa County, Zwedru in Grand Gedeh County, Harper in Maryland County, Tubmanburg in Bomi County, Kakata in Margibi County, Gbarnga in Bong County and Sanniquellie in Nimba County. The construction of the police headquarters in Grand Kru, River Gee and River Cess Counties is ongoing.

24. The construction of police stations in Webbo, River Gee County and Morweh, River Cess County are also under way. Through UNMIL quick-impact projects, the reconstruction and rehabilitation of police stations in Owensgrove in Grand Bassa County, Salala in Bong County, Unification Town in Margibi County, Schefflin Town in Montserrado County and Robertsport in Grand Cape Mount County have been completed. The rehabilitation of the police stations in Bopolu in Gbarpolu County, Voinjama in Lofa County, Bo-Sinje in Grand Cape Mount County, Foya and Kolahun in Lofa County, Tapeta and Yekepa in Nimba County and Toe Town in Grand Gedeh County is also under way.

25. The further training and equipping of the 450-strong Police Support Unit is ongoing. Some 300 of these officers were already trained in 2005 by the Government of Nigeria. An additional 150 officers will begin training shortly at the National Police Academy. Some members of the Unit have been equipped with firearms and ammunition, as authorized by the Security Council sanctions Committee. The United Nations police are working closely with instructors from the Liberian National Police to ensure that officers who use firearms receive refresher and requalification training in accordance with the firearm policy of the Liberian National Police.

26. Given the small size of the envisaged Armed Forces of Liberia, the Government has decided to establish a 500-strong Police Quick Reaction Unit. The training curriculum and terms of reference for trainers and advisers of the unit are being developed and the selection of recruits is under way. It is envisaged that 200 of these officers will become operational by July 2008 and that the training and equipping of the full unit will be completed by July 2009. The United States and Ireland have agreed to contribute to this project.

2. Training, restructuring and reform of the Armed Forces of Liberia

27. The United States continues to support the building of a new 2,000-strong Armed Forces of Liberia. It has contracted two private companies, DynCorp and Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE), to implement this project. DynCorp is responsible for the recruitment and the provision of basic training of the recruits at the Barclay and Camp Ware training centres, while PAE is responsible for providing

advanced training of the recruits and the construction of the barracks, as well as the battalion and brigade headquarters, at Camp Kessely near Monrovia.

28. The technical assessment mission visited Camp Kessely and the Camp Ware training facility where it noted the very impressive and well-equipped barracks, training facilities and battalion and brigade headquarters constructed by PAE and DynCorp for the new armed forces. The private contractors informed the assessment mission that most of the $20 million already spent in restructuring the new army has been invested in the construction of these facilities.

29. However, so far, only 105 recruits have completed basic training. Nine of these recruits were commissioned as second lieutenants on 8 May after graduating from the Officers' Candidate School in March. On 21 July, basic training for the second batch of 525 recruits commenced at Camp Ware. The new Armed Forces of Liberia will be comprised of two infantry battalions, an engineering unit, a military police unit, a military band and medical personnel.

3. Development of a national security strategy and architecture

30. The Government is still in the process of elaborating a national security strategy and architecture, which are expected to define the respective roles of the Armed Forces of Liberia, the Liberian National Police, the Liberian Seaport Police, the Police Quick Reaction Unit, the Special Security Service, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, Customs and other key security agencies, as well as provide for a national policymaking and crisis-management capacity and an intelligence-gathering agency. It is envisaged that these security agencies will have clear mandates, which will complement each other. The overall security architecture should ensure that Liberia's security sector has the capacity to anticipate and deal with security threats before they materialize.

4. Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation

31. A verification exercise carried out earlier this year by a technical working group comprised of UNMIL, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the European Commission, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Rehabilitation concluded that some 90,000 ex-combatants have benefited from the reintegration and rehabilitation programme, some 2,000 ex-combatants (2 per cent) have spontaneously reintegrated into communities and some 9,000 eligible ex-combatants are still awaiting reintegration opportunities. UNDP informed the assessment mission that it had provided reintegration opportunities for some 63,000 ex-combatants and planned to close its trust fund at the end of June. It is envisaged that other international partners will provide training opportunities to the remaining caseload of ex-combatants within ongoing programmes.

32. Many Liberians, however, informed the assessment mission that the reintegration programme has failed to provide sustainable alternative livelihoods for ex-combatants. The majority of ex-combatants are still unemployed and thousands have regrouped for the purpose of illegally exploiting natural resources in diamond and gold mining areas, as well as on rubber plantations.

33. UNMIL continues to collect and destroy residual weapons and ammunition voluntarily surrendered or discovered through search operations. Since the end of the disarmament and demobilization programme in 2005, a total of 748 weapons, 1,390 pieces of unexploded ordnance, 99,980 rounds of ammunition and 11,790 assorted spares and miscellaneous parts have been collected and destroyed by UNMIL. The UNDP community arms collection programme has collected 320 rifles, 36,593 rounds of ammunition, 938 assorted spare parts and 706 pieces of unexploded ordnance since its launch in January 2006.

5. Supporting the consolidation of State authority

34. Progress in the consolidation of State authority throughout the country remains slow, owing to the lack of financial resources, office and residential accommodation, logistics and passable roads, as well as capacity constraints. Only 10 of the 15 county administration buildings are expected to be completely rehabilitated by October 2007, while the remaining five will be rehabilitated during the next fiscal year. County support teams, comprised of representatives of UNMIL, the United Nations country team, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, county administrations, government line ministries and non-governmental organizations, are assisting in building the capacities of local authorities to assess, plan, coordinate and deliver basic services. These teams meet on a monthly basis to report on progress and challenges in each county.

35. The United Kingdom's Department for International Development has agreed to provide a grant of US$ 2.5 million to the Civil Service Agency, the Governance Reform Commission and the Liberian Institute for Public Administration, in support of the Liberian public service capacity-building programme, while the World Bank has provided a grant of US$ 900,000 under the low income countries under stress programme, to assist reform activities. In addition to these initiatives, the Government of Liberia is establishing, with the assistance of international partners, a Senior Executive Service designed to attract qualified Liberians to public service.

36. Municipal and chieftaincy elections have been delayed owing to a lack of resources. According to the Minister of the Interior, US$ 19 million is needed to organize these elections. In the meantime, elections for county branches of the National Traditional Council of Liberia are ongoing.

6. Promotion of human rights and the rule of law

(a) Human rights

37. The human rights situation in the country continues to improve. However, deficiencies in the justice system are posing serious challenges to efforts to promote and protect human rights. There are recurring reports of court officials who continue to apply rules and procedures in an inconsistent manner, fail to observe minimum human rights standards and engage in corrupt practices. In addition, trial by ordeal is still practised in some areas, partially because of the absence of functioning courts and police in remote areas.

38. The enactment of the Rape Amendment Act in 2006 has had little impact on stemming the high incidence of sexual violence, including rape of women and girls. In support of the Government's efforts to address this situation, UNMIL and the United Nations country team established a joint task force, which reviewed the

processes involved in the handling of rape cases and made recommendations on the way forward.

39. The Independent National Commission on Human Rights has still not been fully established owing to the delay in the appointment of its commissioners. As a result, a national human rights action plan has not been developed.

(b) Support for the judicial and corrections system

40. The development of the judicial and corrections system has been very slow. The judicial system is constrained by limited infrastructure, shortage of qualified personnel, lack of capacity to process cases, poor management and lack of the necessary will to institute reforms. As a result of these shortcomings, many Liberians have little confidence in the justice system.

41. Although State prosecutors are now assigned to every circuit court and most magistrates' courts, there are still insufficient public defence counsels assigned to the counties. As a result, many indigent defendants do not have access to legal counsel.

42. The state of the juvenile justice system is a source of deep concern. The sole juvenile court in Monrovia, as well as those county magistrates' courts which are authorized to exercise juvenile jurisdiction, lack qualified personnel. In addition, juveniles are often held for long periods in pre-trial detention with adults, or are either tried by magistrates' courts or released without trial.

43. UNMIL has continued to provide training for legal and judicial officers. Since May 2006, 336 magistrates, 220 justices of the peace, 226 prosecutors, 147 magistrates' court clerks and 53 circuit and Supreme Court clerks have been trained. In addition, UNMIL has provided legal training to 351 immigration officers. Nine quick-impact projects for courthouses have been completed and work is ongoing on four other courthouses. However, considerable additional funding will be required to renovate all the courthouses in the country.

44. A bill to establish a law reform commission has been drafted with the support of UNMIL and the United States Institute of Peace. Once established, the commission is expected to undertake a comprehensive review of the laws of Liberia. UNMIL is assisting the Ministry of Justice in identifying laws to be repealed or reformed, including those that do not conform to international standards. In addition, the Mission is helping the Government to elaborate a policy framework for judicial reform.

45. With respect to the corrections system, UNMIL is training personnel of the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation and providing security at correctional facilities. So far, UNMIL has recruited and trained 104 corrections officers and intends to train another 125 officers in 2007. In addition, the Mission will need to provide intensive training and mentoring to corrections officers at three new facilities which will open shortly in Gbarnga, Bong County, Tubmanburg, Bomi County and Greenville, Sinoe County. In the meantime, the United States has agreed to fund the deactivation of some 60 correction officers.

46. Most of the correction facilities, including the Monrovia Central Prison, are overcrowded. Due to the acute shortage of staff and the poor working conditions at these facilities, jailbreaks and disturbances are a regular occurrence. Two new

facilities in Monrovia and Zwedru are due to open later this year, which should help to partially alleviate the problems of overcrowding. In addition, UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have agreed to renovate the old prison and build a new facility in Gbarnga. Currently, the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation has 10 operational corrections facilities in 9 of the 15 counties in the country.

7. Promoting national reconciliation

47. The mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is due to expire in September 2008. Thus far, the Commission has only recorded 5,000 out of an estimated 30,000 statements. In addition, it has received only $2.2 million out of a projected initial operating budget of US$ 14 million. The work of the Commission was suspended earlier this year owing to management and transparency problems. In March, a joint working group comprised of representatives of the Commission and the International Contact Group on Liberia was established to assist the Commission in overcoming these challenges. So far, the working group has proposed revisions to the budget, provided policy guidelines, developed a work plan and revised the staffing strength and personnel policies of the Commission.

48. With respect to the Government's efforts to foster political and ethnic reconciliation, the opposition political parties expressed the view that genuine national reconciliation is yet to begin and accused the Government of pursuing policies that could revive old ethnic and social cleavages. President Johnson-Sirleaf acknowledged that the Government needed to do more to engage with the opposition parties and to promote national reconciliation, while pointing out that her Government was inclusive. She informed the assessment mission that she intended to conduct a consultative process to solicit the views of Liberian political groups and civil society on issues of national importance. The President has since commenced these consultations, as indicated in paragraph 3 of the present report.

8. Promoting efficient management of natural resources

49. Following the enactment of the National Forestry Reform Law in August 2006, and the lifting of sanctions on the export of Liberian timber, the Government of Liberia established the Forestry Reform Monitoring Committee to develop a forestry reform package and to monitor the implementation of 29 forestry regulations.

50. With the termination of sanctions on diamonds on 27 April, Liberia was admitted to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme on 4 May. On 28 July, the Government removed the country's self-imposed ban on diamond mining, which paves the way for the official export of diamonds. In the meantime, the widespread illegal mining of diamonds by ex-combatants, foreigners and unemployed youth continues to pose serious challenges to the Government's efforts to re-establish its authority in the areas concerned.

51. UNMIL is supporting the Government in its efforts to revive Liberia's rubber industry by assisting in the recovery of plantations, including those that are illegally occupied by ex-combatants. The Mission continues to provide security at the Guthrie rubber plantation, which was recovered and placed under the management of an interim team established by the Government. The security situation on the Cocopa rubber plantation, another illegally occupied property, has improved significantly following the collection of single-barrel shotguns from the plantation's

residents. As a result, the Government was able to transfer the management of the plantation to the concession owner in April. The Government's re-possession of the Sinoe rubber plantation has been delayed owing to the poor state of the roads in Sinoe County. The plantation is currently being occupied by ex-combatants, who are exploiting the lack of State authority in the area to extract rubber illegally.

9. Supporting implementation of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme

52. The implementation of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP) continues to make progress. The Government's financial management practices have improved considerably, especially in the areas of budgeting, expenditure controls, cash management and procurement planning. The Government has established a Technical Secretariat for the Cash Management Committee and an integrated financial management information system. It has also instituted policies and guidelines to improve procurement practices and the granting of concessions.

53. On 28 April, the President attended a retreat with international partners to review progress made in the implementation of GEMAP. Pursuant to recommendations made at the retreat, which were subsequently accepted by the GEMAP Steering Committee, the GEMAP technical team is now being co-chaired by the Government and international partners. In addition, government agencies hosting internationally recruited GEMAP experts are now expected to submit joint expert/government quarterly reports to the technical team, highlighting the issues resolved, results achieved and plans to address ongoing problems.

IV. Economic recovery, reconstruction and development

54. Liberia's economy has begun to rebound. The growth rate, which was 5.3 per cent in 2005, has increased to 7.9 per cent in 2007. The gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices is estimated at US$ 574.5 million, with a per capita income of US$ 163. The sectoral performance of the economy showed some signs of recovery last year, with the agricultural sector, including forestry, accounting for 95.4 per cent of export earnings. By the end of 2006, Liberia's external debt portfolio was estimated at US$ 3.7 billion, which is about 800 per cent of GDP and 3,000 per cent of exports. The country's domestic debt, including salary arrears, is estimated at US$ 700 million.

55. Employment generation is still a major challenge and a key priority of the Government. A joint initiative of the Ministry of Public Works, UNMIL, UNDP, UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Bank, aimed at rehabilitating critical roads, has so far provided short-term employment opportunities for some 9,000 workers, including ex-combatants. In addition, some 4,000 community members and ex-combatants have benefited from the rehabilitation of roads by UNMIL military engineers. With the assistance of the WFP "Food support to local initiatives" programme and the Ministry of Public Works, UNMIL has facilitated the employment of some 8,000 local community members in roadside brushing and other basic road repair works, and over 9,000 community members have been employed through labour-intensive infrastructure projects supported by USAID, the European Commission, the Swiss Development

Corporation and international non-governmental organizations. Despite these achievements, more efforts are needed to encourage massive private-sector investments in order to generate employment.

V. Humanitarian situation

56. The humanitarian situation in Liberia continues to improve. However, the country still faces serious challenges, particularly in the health, education, food, and water and sanitation sectors. In this regard, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) provided US$ 4 million through the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and their implementing partners to improve access to health facilities and essential drugs, construct and rehabilitate water and sanitation facilities and enhance food security.

57. So far only 21.1 per cent of the US$ 117 million needed to address high-priority humanitarian needs, including the delivery of basic social services, the provision of productive livelihoods for returnee communities and the strengthening of civil society and local authorities, as outlined in the 2007 Common Humanitarian Action Plan for Liberia, has been received.

58. On a positive note, the UNHCR-supported voluntary repatriation programme was completed on 30 June. Through this programme, UNHCR has assisted the voluntary repatriation of some 110,000 refugees, while some 50,000 refugees are reported to have returned spontaneously. There are now approximately 80,000 refugees remaining to be repatriated from various countries in the subregion. There are also 16,253 refugees from Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and other countries residing in Liberia.

VI. Gender

59. The Mission's Gender Adviser Unit has developed an action plan, with benchmarks, for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. The Unit also continues to conduct gender training for UNMIL personnel and for corrections officers. Through its membership of various committees and working groups, the Mission is providing technical, logistical and financial support for the implementation of a national action plan in the areas of the rule of law, the protection of the rights of women and girls and the promotion of women in decision-making areas.

VII. HIV/AIDS

60. The UNMIL HIV/AIDS Unit is collaborating with the Mission's integrated training cell to conduct awareness training and sensitization, as well as personal risk assessment sessions, as part of the induction training for military, police and civilian personnel. It also promotes HIV/AIDS awareness in Liberia through its participation in an UNMIL live phone-in programme.

VIII. Personnel conduct and discipline

61. In the first half of the year, seven cases of sexual exploitation and abuse were reported in UNMIL, as compared to 21 cases in the same period last year. In addition, four "category 1" cases and 70 "category 2" disciplinary cases were reported. Investigations of two of the seven cases of sexual exploitation and abuse have been completed, while investigations into the remaining five cases are continuing.

62. The Mission's conduct and discipline team is focusing on developing and implementing strategies to prevent, identify, report and effectively respond to all categories of misconduct by United Nations personnel. The Mission continues to emphasize the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse in its training and awareness raising campaigns. UNMIL also assists in the coordination of the Government's national sexual exploitation and abuse awareness campaign.

IX. Public information

63. The UNMIL public information unit continues to support the priority programmes of the Mission, as well as those of the United Nations agencies, the Government of Liberia and civil society. The Mission organized a series of public outreach events and radio programmes, including a five-week nationwide "sport for peace" tournament in March. UNMIL Radio introduced five new programmes to provide more coverage of social and human rights issues. In addition, the Mission is conducting training for local media, supporting the Ministry of Information in the training of public information personnel and conducting media and public relations/information training for members of the Liberian National Police.

X. Adjustment and drawdown of the Mission

64. As indicated in my previous reports, UNMIL repatriated one company (250 military personnel) in March 2006 in compliance with Security Council resolution 1626 (2005) of 19 September 2005. The Mission also repatriated one battalion (750 military personnel) in December 2006 as a result of the relative stability that had prevailed since the inauguration of the new Government. The current UNMIL troop strength stands at 14,141 out of the authorized strength of 15,125, while its police strength stands at 1,180 (including 18 corrections officers) out of the authorized maximum of 1,240 officers.

65. The technical assessment mission and UNMIL have determined that notwithstanding the remaining challenges facing the country and the security risks identified in section III of the present report, sufficient progress has been made in the implementation of the Mission's mandate and in stabilizing the security situation in the country to allow for further adjustments to be made to the military and police components of UNMIL.

Benchmarks

66. The assessment mission proposed that the pace of the drawdown process should be linked to the following core benchmarks: (a) completion of the basic training of 3,500 personnel of the Liberian National Police by July 2007; (b) completion of police operating procedures by December 2008; (c) completion of the formation of the 500-strong Police Quick Reaction Unit by July 2009, (d) equipping of police personnel and their deployment to the counties, as well as building of police infrastructure by December 2010; (e) finalization of the national security strategy and architecture and their implementation throughout the country by December 2008; and (f) training and operationalization of the first and second Armed Forces of Liberia battalions by September 2008 and September 2009, respectively.

67. In addition, the restoration of the rule of law and the strengthening of State administration and authority in all of Liberia's 15 counties, along with the elections scheduled to take place in Sierra Leone in 2007 and in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire in 2008, are important contextual benchmarks that need to be taken into account when deciding on the timing of adjustments to UNMIL troop deployments.

XI. Recommendations

A. Military component

68. UNMIL and the technical assessment mission developed a concept which provides for the drawdown of the military component of the Mission in three stages. During the first stage, 2,450 troops (three infantry battalions and three infantry companies) would be repatriated, leaving the Mission's troop strength at 11,691. There would be no significant change in the Mission's deployment locations and smaller units would be redeployed to locations left by the repatriated troops.

69. The second stage of the drawdown would focus on restructuring the existing four military sectors into two. This would involve the repatriation of some 500 military personnel from two sector headquarters, including staff officers, military observers and two medical units, as well as some Force Headquarters staff officers. At the end of this stage, the Mission's troop level would stand at 11,191.

70. In the third stage, a further two battalions and some sector units (2,191 personnel) would be repatriated, reducing the overall troop strength of UNMIL to 9,000 personnel. These reductions would be assessed against the remaining core benchmarks.

71. After the repatriation of each major unit, adjustment periods of three months would follow to provide UNMIL with time to realign its logistic support arrangements and prepare for the next repatriation. In addition, technical assessments would be conducted during the three drawdown stages to assess the progress made in meeting the benchmarks and to make specific recommendations on the further adjustments to the Mission.

72. It is assumed that the 250-strong Mongolian military guard force deployed at the Special Court for Sierra Leone would be retained throughout the drawdown period, unless the Special Court completes its work. Moreover, it is expected that

UNMIL capacity to reinforce UNOCI on the basis of Security Council resolution 1609 (2005) would decrease to an infantry company of approximately 150 troops during the drawdown phase.

73. The technical assessment mission and UNMIL considered several options for implementing the concept described in paragraphs 68 to 70 above. However, following consultations with the Government of Liberia, they recommended only one option. Under this option, stage one (repatriation of 2,450 troops) would start in October 2007 and end in September 2008. It would be followed by a three-month review period (until December 2008) to assess the overall stability of the new force structure and to evaluate progress made in strengthening State administration and authority in all 15 counties, as well as developments in the subregion, including the anticipated elections in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. It was determined that this review period would be critical, given the fragile situation in Liberia and the unpredictability of developments in the subregion. Stage two (repatriation of 500 military personnel and streamlining of the sectors) would start in January 2009 and end in August 2009. A crucial benchmark that would be assessed during this period is the formation of the Police Quick Reaction Unit, which is expected to be completed by July 2009. Stage three (repatriation of 2,191 troops) would then run from September 2009 until December 2010.

74. It is too early to determine when the final withdrawal of UNMIL should take place and to plan for successor arrangements. It is therefore recommended that a technical assessment mission be dispatched to Liberia in mid-2010 to conduct a detailed review of the progress made in stabilizing the country and in the development of the national security sector, with a view to developing a plan for the period beyond December 2010. The important national elections due to be held in Liberia in October 2011 would also need to be taken into account in making the final decision on the Mission's withdrawal.

B. Police component

75. The technical assessment mission, in consultation with UNMIL, recommended a gradual reduction of 498 police advisers in seven stages between April 2008 and December 2010. There will be no drawdown of the 18 corrections officers who are part of the Mission's police strength. Moreover, it will be essential to include an additional six corrections officers to reinforce support for the strengthening of the corrections system. These officers will be deployed to provide training at the new correctional facilities opening shortly in Bong County, Bomi County and Sinoe County. Appropriate "hold and review periods" to assess the security situation in the country and the development of the operational capability of the Liberian National Police would be built into the drawdown process. The proposed reduction would bring the police strength to 742 personnel by December 2010. The five formed police units (605 police personnel), which provide support to the Liberian National Police in controlling riots and civil disturbances, would remain in the Mission area throughout the drawdown period. In addition, police advisers with specialist policing skills, especially in forensics, criminal investigation, management, intelligence, operations, organized crime, professional standards, drug enforcement, airport security and the protection of women and children, will be deployed to the Mission during routine rotations to provide the national police force with advanced training and appropriate mentoring. The adjustments in the level of the UNMIL

police component will also be tied to the core benchmarks referred to in paragraph 66 above.

C. Civilian component

76. UNMIL will continue to adjust its civilian component, as appropriate, to adapt to evolving priorities. The Mission has already started making adjustments to its Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Recovery Section, as well as to its Humanitarian Coordination Section, in the light of the progress made in the reintegration of ex-combatants and in the transition from the emergency humanitarian phase to early recovery.

XII. Observations

77. President Johnson-Sirleaf's Government has made great strides in consolidating peace and promoting economic recovery in the country. The main achievements of the Government include completing the implementation of the measures required to lift timber and diamond sanctions; increasing public revenues by 48 per cent; completing the staff-monitored programme of the International Monetary Fund; preparing and implementing an interim poverty reduction strategy; restoring electricity and water supply to some parts of Monrovia for the first time in 15 years; increasing school enrolment by 40 per cent; improving the human rights situation and cultivating mutually beneficial relations with Liberia's neighbours. In addition, the Government has remained focused on the important priorities of consolidating its authority, fighting corruption, implementing the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme, reforming the security sector, regaining control and regulation of its natural resources and strengthening the capacity of its institutions.

78. These are remarkable achievements for a country that is emerging from a situation of complete lawlessness and whose State institutions and infrastructure had crumbled. However, the remaining challenges are formidable. The process of consolidating peace and rebuilding State institutions is still in its formative stage. Until the army and police can stand on their own and the justice system is rehabilitated and accessible to all Liberians, the country will remain vulnerable to the risk of a return to lawlessness. Moreover, providing alternative livelihoods for ex-combatants and deactivated security sector personnel, creating employment opportunities, ensuring genuine national reconciliation, addressing the needs of the victims of the conflict, alleviating poverty and delivering basic social services to the population are critical tasks that must be accomplished to ensure durable stability in Liberia. In order to meet these challenges, appropriate measures to promote economic growth must be implemented in order to generate the requisite public revenues.

79. The slow progress in strengthening the security sector is a source of great concern. The training of the Armed Forces of Liberia has faced considerable delays, which has resulted in the postponement of the operationalization date of its units. Meanwhile, although significant progress has been made in meeting the training benchmarks for the Liberian National Police, its operational effectiveness is constrained by the lack of adequate funding, vehicles, communication equipment

and accommodation. These deficiencies are a major obstacle to the full deployment of the police throughout the country. The management of the Liberian National Police will also need to be strengthened. I appeal to the international community to generously support the equipping and deployment of the Liberian National Police and to assist in completing the training of the new Armed Forces of Liberia expeditiously. I also call on the Government of Liberia to finalize its national security strategy and architecture in the coming months.

80. Although illegal diamond mining continues to pose serious challenges and remains a potential source of instability, it is gratifying to note the commendable efforts of the Government to curb these activities, which have resulted in the lifting of the sanctions on diamonds and Liberia's admission into the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. I encourage the Government to further strengthen its regulation of this important sector and to ensure, in particular, that Liberia becomes fully compliant with the Kimberley Process.

81. President Johnson-Sirleaf is to be commended for the positive steps that she has taken to foster national reconciliation and political inclusiveness in the country. However, the ethnic and social cleavages that have plagued the country in the past could still resurface. I therefore call on the Government of Liberia to intensify its efforts to promote national and local reconciliation in the interest of sustaining peace and stability in the country.

82. The uncertain situation in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea poses additional challenges to stability in Liberia. I am encouraged however by the continuing efforts to strengthen cordial relations among the countries of the Mano River Basin.

83. Considering the many challenges that still face Liberia, in particular its complex and fragile security environment, I recommend that the Security Council approve the drawdown concept set out in section XI above, as well as the force levels described in paragraph 73 and the plan for the adjustment of the UNMIL police component set out in paragraph 75. The proposed plan allows UNMIL to adapt to evolving priorities and to conduct a gradual, phased and deliberate transfer of responsibility for the security of Liberia to the Government in a manner that gives the Government the opportunity to build its capacity, while the Mission continues to help to maintain the prevailing stability. The plan emerged from a careful analysis of the existing security situation, as well as a thorough threat assessment and evaluation of the unfinished tasks under the UNMIL mandate. The plan is also the product of close consultations with the Government of Liberia, national stakeholders and Liberia's partners.

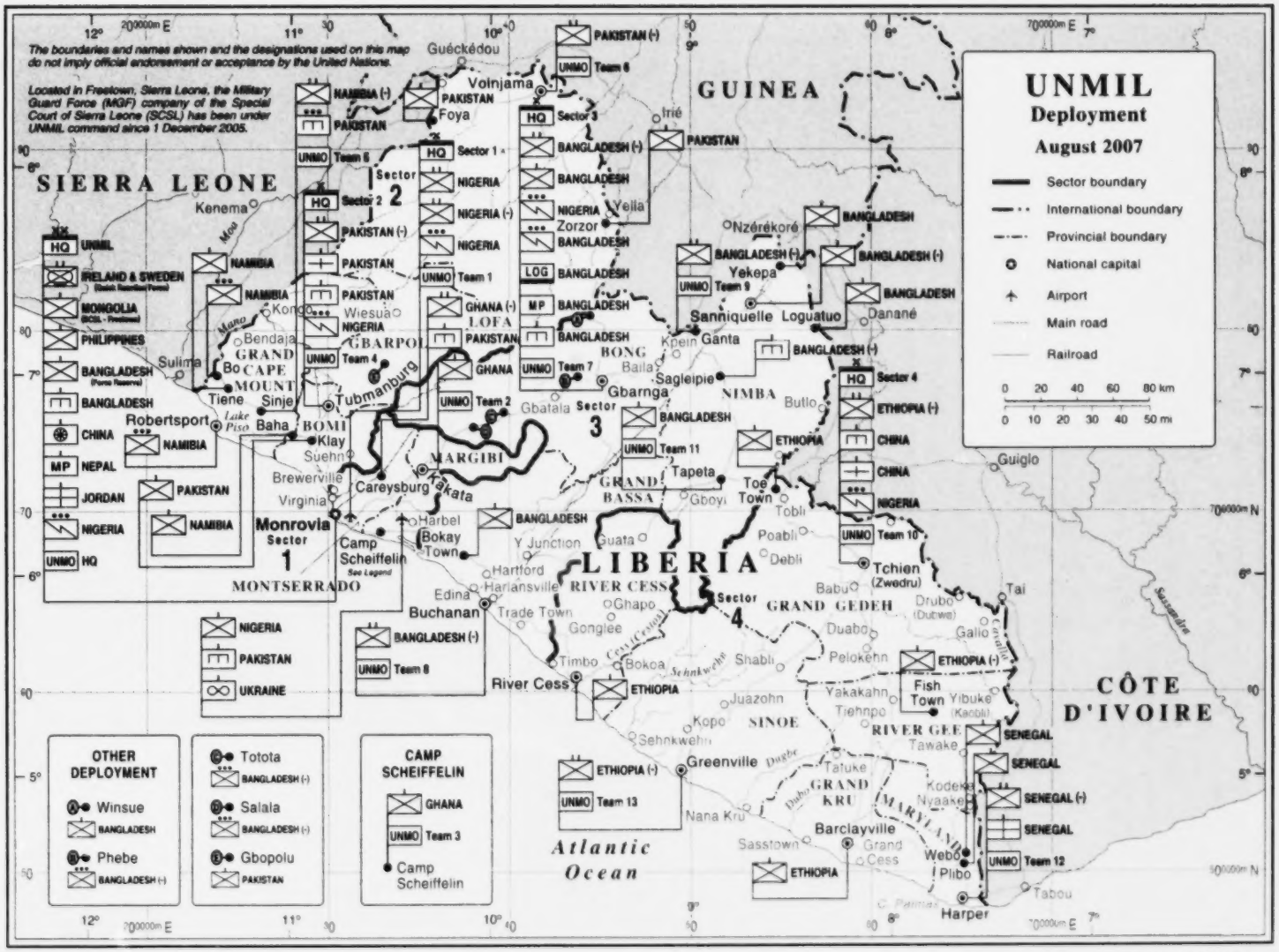
84. The drawdown process will need to be continually assessed in the context of the specific benchmarks identified in the present report. The Government and the international community are therefore strongly encouraged to make a timely and effective investment in the accomplishment of these benchmarks. Should the Council approve these proposals, I intend to submit regular updates on the implementation of the drawdown process. This would provide the Security Council, the Government and UNMIL with the opportunity to take stock of the security situation and to evaluate the progress made in accomplishing the benchmarks. In the meantime, I recommend that the Mission's mandate be extended for a further period of one year, until September 2008.

85. In conclusion, I wish to express my deep appreciation to the Security Council and to troop- and police-contributing countries, as well as to ECOWAS, the African Union and donor countries, for their continued support in consolidating peace in Liberia. I also wish to pay tribute to my Special Representative, Alan Doss, and all UNMIL military and civilian personnel, and humanitarian and development agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations, for their important contributions to the continued progress of peace consolidation in Liberia.

United Nations Mission in Liberia: military and civilian police strength (as at 1 August 2007)

Component	*Military*				*Police*
Country	*Military observers*	*Staff officer*	*Troops*	*Total*	*Civilian police*
Argentina				0	8
Bangladesh	17	11	3 187	3 215	28
Benin	3	1		4	
Bolivia	3	1		4	
Bosnia and Herzegovina				0	11
Brazil		2		2	
Bulgaria	2			2	
China	6	7	558	571	18
Croatia		5		5	
Czech Republic	3			3	5
Denmark	2			2	
Ecuador	2	1		3	
El Salvador	3			3	2
Ethiopia	19	8	1 798	1 825	
Egypt	8			8	4
Fiji				0	30
Finland		2		2	
France		1		1	
Gambia	4			4	30
Germany				0	5
Ghana	12	8	849	869	40
India					125
Indonesia	3			3	
Ireland		1		1	
Jamaica				0	7
Jordan	7	8	115	130	140
Kenya	3	4		7	19
Kyrgyzstan	4			4	2
Malawi		2		2	20
Malaysia	10			10	
Mali	4	1		5	
Moldova	3	1		4	
Mongolia		2	248	250	
Montenegro	2			2	
Namibia	3	4	608	615	5
Nepal	3	2	40	45	256

Component	*Military*				*Police*
Country	*Military observers*	*Staff officer*	*Troops*	*Total*	*Civilian police*
Niger	3			3	
Nigeria	17	12	1 944	1 973	163
Norway				0	10
Pakistan	16	12	3 389	3 417	32
Paraguay	3	1		4	
Peru	3	1		4	
Philippines	3	5	165	173	33
Poland	2			2	3
Portugal				0	
Republic of Korea	1	1		2	
Romania	3			3	
Russian Federation	6			6	8
Rwanda				0	12
Samoa				0	13
Senegal	3	2	598	603	
Serbia	4			4	3
South Africa				0	
Sri Lanka				0	1
Sweden				0	14
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia				0	1
Togo	2	1		3	
Turkey				0	23
Uganda				0	21
United Kingdom		3		3	
Ukraine	3	1	300	304	13
Uruguay				0	3
United States	7	6		13	8
Yemen				0	4
Zambia	3			3	27
Zimbabwe	2			2	30
Total	**207**	**117**	**13 799**	**14 123**	**1 177**



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